

established and the Royal Society of London has appointed an executive committee to manage it. The Kew Observatory and its work has been transferred to this new committee and the old Kew Observatory committee has terminated its existence. The chairman of the new executive committee is to be the president of the Royal Society *ex officio*. The vice chairman is Lord Rayleigh; other members of the committee represent the board of trade, the royal society, the Kew committee, the institutes of civil, mechanical, and electrical engineers, the iron and steel institute, the society of chemical industry, and the institute of naval architects.

The executive committee will continue and extend the work hitherto carried on at the Kew Observatory. Dr. Chree, the recent superintendent, and all the other members of the observatory staff will continue to serve under the new committee. Prof. R. T. Glazebrook will be the director of the National Physical Laboratory. Arrangements will be made for the publication of the results of work done at this laboratory and exchanges of publications are invited.

THE LONDON METEOROLOGICAL OFFICE.

We copy the following from *Nature* of February 28, 1900:

On the 28th of February Mr. Robert H. Scott will retire from the post of Secretary to the Meteorological Council. At the end of the year 1899 Mr. Scott had completed thirty-three years of service in the Meteorological Office, and for the last twenty-five years has acted as secretary of the International Meteorological Committee, which honorary position, we understand, he will continue to hold until the next meeting of that committee in September. Mr. W. N. Shaw, F. R. S., Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and hitherto Assistant Director of the Cavendish Laboratory and lecturer in physics in the University of Cambridge, has been appointed as successor to Mr. Scott. Mr. Shaw has been a member of the Meteorological Council since May, 1897, and will continue to hold that position in addition to that of secretary.

The appointment of Mr. Shaw as Secretary of the Meteorological Council and Superintendent of the Meteorological Office at London will be recognized by every one as demonstrating the high position meteorology has at last attained among the sciences cultivated in England. For a long time it has, we fear, been at the bottom of the list. Many a time we have been assured that its problems were too difficult for the analyst, and its relations with agriculture and mercantile affairs too intimate to free it from the sordid everyday relations that characterize business rather than science. But when now we see the finest physical laboratory of the nation relinquish its distinguished assistant director and encourage him to devote his energies to this most difficult branch of experimental and theoretical physics, we at once realize that under his guidance meteorology is certain to assume no second rank in England. The brilliant discoveries that have been made in the departments of chemistry and electricity have, for a generation past, given those branches of science a halo whose glory may have temporarily blinded young students to the attractiveness and importance of other branches, but we hope that a reaction has now set in, and that England's best talent will be devoted to the comprehensive study of the atmosphere. Many of the details have, indeed, been developed by Mr. Shaw's associates at Cambridge, by such men as Stokes and Maxwell, Forsyth, Darwin, Thomson, Dewar, Glazebrook, Larmor, Love, and Glaisher, but it now re-

mains for him to combine all in one general work on the mechanics and physics of the atmosphere, as the special work of the London Meteorological Office.

MAXIMUM PRESSURE OF WIND.

A correspondent inquires whether any steps have been taken to record the maximum pressures of the wind and adds that 5-minute or 1-minute velocities do not determine the damaging force of the wind, which is a matter of a few seconds. We believe that it is now generally well recognized that the pressure of the wind and the damage it does depends not only on the velocity of the wind but on the shape of the obstacle against which it strikes. Gages for the measurement of pressure have, indeed, been devised and used for a century past, but their records do not give any satisfactory information as to the pressure against some other object located even a few yards away. In general, it would lead to great error if we should attempt to apply the pressure recorded at one spot to explain the damage done at another spot. To be sure, even the records of wind velocity are local and unsatisfactory, so that we can not apply them to the explanation of the damage done at some adjacent locality; but the pressure gages are even less reliable than the velocity gages; therefore it is that the Weather Bureau confines its work to the measurement of velocity by means of the Robinson anemometer.

If one wishes to know the pressure that produced damage in a specific case, he must experiment and calculate for that case specifically. No general apparatus, such as a square or circular pressure plate or spherical ball, can have any close bearing upon the problem. The pressure of the wind is a question in engineering and not in meteorology.

GEORGE JAMES SYMONS.

The sudden death of Mr. Symons on March 10, as the result of a stroke of paralysis on the evening of February 14, will be felt as a loss in meteorological circles wherever the science is cultivated. Mr. Symons was born August 6, 1838, and became interested in meteorological work as a lad. He served for a few years under Admiral Fitzroy in the meteorological department of the Board of Trade. In 1857 he started an organization for observing and recording thunderstorms and soon after began his great work on British rainfall. The first annual volume of the rainfall series contained records from 168 stations, for the year 1860, and the fortieth volume, which will soon be issued, will have about 3,500. In 1866 he began the publication of the Meteorological Magazine which still continues as supplementary to his British Rainfall. He was a very active member of all the British and foreign societies interested in meteorology. His library was extensive, and his contributions to the bibliography of meteorology form a large fraction of the titles contained in the bibliography published by the Signal Service. His great kindness and genial personality were known everywhere; he had the power of drawing around him a vast number of friends.

His devotion to meteorology is emphasized by the fact that his whole fortune has been left in trust to secure the continuation of British Rainfall in perpetuity and the responsibility for this work will now rest on Mr. H. Sowerby Wallis.